

Importance and Significance of Beards

Hisham bin Muhammad bin As Saib Al Kalbi (d. 204 AH), a scholarly historian, narrated that he had done two extraordinary things which none would have done. He completed memorizing the Quran in such less time that none would surpass him (only three days); and he made a mistake like which none would have committed. The story of his mistake is that one day he took a mirror and found out that his beard had grown very long and irregular. He caught hold of nearly a handful of his beard to cut the extra part of his beard. But by mistake, instead of cutting the beard below his hand, he moved the scissor over his hand, thus cutting almost his entire beard¹.

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Hisham narrates his story as the biggest blunder and slip of his life and also adds that none would have ever committed such a foolish mistake. Comparing this with our times, we find a sea of difference in the attitude of a considerable section of our population for whom keeping beards is against western fashion, so it has no chance to exist in their life. At the same time when we find beards on the faces of great human beings of the past like Archimedes, Galileo, Jesus, and even Rabindra Nath Tagore of our India and of our twentieth century, we feel forced to think what we should really prefer. For a wise, rational person with a thinking mind, an irrational fashion promoted by unthinking mercenary models and minor and major stars cannot be the sole standard to be followed in his life. In fact, we find that long beautiful flowing beards have been adorning the faces of all pious and spiritual people and priests irrespective of regions and religions. He may be a Hindu sadhu, a Christian priest or a Jewish rabbi; he may have been living on this earth three thousand years ago or a few centuries ago or be alive in our own age; again he may belong to the cold countries of Europe, or the warm continent of Africa, or a moderate Asian nation; but one thing is common among them all: they take pride in their beards.

The truest book on earth, the Quran mentions the beard of a prophet of earlier times: Prophet Haroon², the elder brother of Hazrat Moosa (peace be upon them). In fact, the practice of growing beards, far from being a local custom of the Holy Prophet's days, turns out to be a universal natural way of life for all descendants of Adam. When we turn the pages of hadith books, we find that letting the beard grow is one of the ten important acts according to fitra: acts which are in complete harmony with the human nature and which make up the personality and distinctive features of a community and society:

A'isha reported: The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Ten are the acts of fitra (naturalness): clipping the moustache, **letting the beard grow**, using the tooth-stick, snuffing water in the nose, cutting the nails, washing the finger joints, plucking the armpit-hair, shaving the pubes and

¹ p. 149, *Ilmi Lataaif* by Maulana Abdur Raoof Aali, Urdu translation of Arabic book *Kitabul Azkia*

² Quran 20:94. قَالَ يَا ابْنُ أُمِّ لَآ تَأْخُذْ بِرَأْسِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي

"He [Hârûn (Aaron)] said: "O son of my mother! Seize (me) not by my beard, nor by my head." Maulana Mufti Saeed Sb Palanpuri writes that obviously a beard can be seized only if it is handful, and not a trimmed one.

cleaning one's private parts with water. The narrator said: I have forgotten the tenth, but it may have been rinsing the mouth.³ (Reported by Muslim 2:11:502, Ahmad, Nasai, Abu Dawood and Baihaqi)

That the holy Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم commands regarding beard-growing number in dozens bears ample testimony to the fact that this is as important a facet of Islam as any other thing. As an illustration, just three hadiths are quoted here, each of which have been reported in the most of the six popular books of hadiths:

- Ibn Umar said, The Prophet said, 'Do the opposite of what the pagans do. Keep the beards and cut the moustaches short.⁴ (Bukhari 7:72:780)
- Ibn 'Umar narrated: Allah's Apostle said, "Cut the moustaches short and leave the beard (as it is)."⁵ (Bukhari 7:72:781)
- Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Trim the moustache short, and grow beard, and thus act against the fire-worshippers.⁶ (Muslim 2:11:501)

A full-grown beard not only adds to the attractive and impressive personality of a man, it also marks out a man from a woman. Above all, it is the distinctive feature of Muslim community as a whole. That's why in several hadiths regarding beards, the holy Prophet stresses the point that a Muslim should maintain some difference from others. In that age also, there were fools groping in the dark in absence of divine light and guidance who used to grow moustache and cut short their beards. They were Zoroastrians. When the Chosroe sent two officers Baanvaih and Kharkhusro from his Yaman province to arrest the Mercy to Humanity صلى الله عليه وسلم, they began to tremble because of the Prophet's awe. The Prophet's heart felt hurt on looking at their stupid faces with shaved beards and long moustache. The first question that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked them was, "Who has forced you to spoil your faces?" "Our lord (Chosroe, the Persian emperor)," they replied. The holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stated that as for me, my Lord (Allah) has commanded me to grow beard and shorten the moustache.⁷

³ Muslim 261 باب خصال الفطرة

عن زكرياء بن أبي زائدة عن مصعب بن شيبه عن طلق بن حبيب عن عبدالله بن الزبير عن عائشة قالت قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: عشر من الفطرة قص الشارب وإعفاء اللحية والسواك واستنشاق الماء وقص الأظفار وغسل البراجم وبتف الإبط وحلق العانة وانتقاص الماء. قال زكرياء قال مصعب ونسيت العاشرة إلا أن تكون المضمضة.

⁴ Bukhari:5553 باب تقليم الأظفار

عن ابن عمر: عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال (خالفوا المشركين وفروا للحي وأحفوا الشوارب).

⁵ Bukhari:5554 باب تقليم الأظفار

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم (انهكوا الشوارب وأعفوا للحي).

⁶ Muslim:260 باب خصال الفطرة

عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم جزوا الشوارب وأرخوا للحي خالفوا المجوس.

⁷ *Al Wafa bi Ahwaal il Mustafa* by Ibn Jauzi vol 2, p 733, from *Beards and the practices of the Prophets* by Mufti Saeed Ahmad Palanpuri, p 119-120. The story is also reported by Ibn Saad in *Tabaqaat* vol 1, Ibn Abi Shaiba in *Musannaf* and it is reported in *Seerat e Halbia* also.

The hadith is quite clear in its message that even the beardless face of an unknown stranger, a hostile non-Muslim is hurtful to the Prophet. Can you just imagine how much the spoilt clean-shaven face of a Muslim youth or adult would hurt him?

When an admirer of famous Persian poet Mirza Bedil of India visited him from Iran, he was surprised to see him getting his beard trimmed. Having read the poet's eulogies for Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he had formed an opinion that the poet would be a pious good Muslim. The Iranian fan could not control his feelings. "Sir, you are getting your hair trimmed!!". The tone of rebuke and revulsion from a nobody (common man) did elicit a response from the poet.

"Yes, I do shave my beard, but I do not shave (hurt) anybody's heart," was the arrogant reply from the poet.

"Oh, but you are in fact running your blade on the holy Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم heart!!"

Wisdom dawned on the poet! He kept quiet thinking over the profound words of the common man. He made no counter-reply.

When Satan was thrown out of his heavenly abode because of his arrogance and disobedience, he had vowed that he would not enter the Hell alone on the Day of Judgement. Rather he would wean away a considerable portion of mankind to disobey Him and consequently follow him to Hell. He resolved to mislead the humans by inviting them to all sorts of sins, one of the significant among them is "changing the nature of Allah's creation". Islamic scholars are unanimous that this is strictly prohibited (haraam). And according to Quranic exegetes⁸ (commentators), denigrating and ruining the sacredness of one's face comes under this sin of "changing the nature of Allah's creation" as Allah has created beards to adorn the faces of sons of Adam, not to be shaved away. The utter eternal loss and failure of such people is also described in the same verse:

Verily, I (Satan) will mislead them ... and indeed I will order them to change the nature created by Allâh." And whoever takes Shaitân (Satan) as a Walî (protector or helper) instead of Allâh, has surely suffered a manifest loss. (4:119)⁹

⁸ See *Bayanul Quran* p159, *Tafseer e Shaikhul Hind* p127, *Tafseer e Haqqani* v3 p229.

⁹ وَلَاضِلَّهُمْ وَلَا مَنِيَّتَهُمْ وَلَا مَرْئِيَّتَهُمْ فَلْيَتَّبِعْكُمُ أَذَانُ الْأَنْعَامِ وَلَا مَرْئِيَّتَهُمْ فَلْيَتَّبِعْكُمُ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلْيَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرًا مُبِينًا {4:119}

Once the holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to Hazrat Ruaifi' bin Thaabit to inform the people of coming generations that he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) disowns any person who ties up his beards into knots in violation of the Islamic command to leave the beard in its natural condition to grow fully and freely (Abu Dawood)¹⁰. If only displacing the beard from its natural state is so much sinful as to deprive the crime-committer from Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم recommendation for Allah's mercy on the Day of Judgement, we can well imagine the disastrous fate of those who defiantly shave their beards.

It is a matter where the views of all Islamic scholars belonging to entirely different schools of thoughts converge and there is complete unanimity among them that shaving the beard is haraam. Maulana Mufti Saeed Ahmad Palanpuri, the revered Islamic scholar (Shaikhul Hadith of Darul Uloom, Deoband) in his book *Beards and the practices of the Prophets* has compiled several such quotes. Here are a few of them:

- Allama Mahmood Khattab writes: Shaving beards is strictly prohibited (haraam) in the opinion of all mujtahid (authoritative) scholars like Imam Abu Haneefa, Malik, Shafi, Ahmad bin Hanbal and others. (*Al Manhal* v1 p186)
- The reputed Hanafi book of Fiqh (jurisprudence) *Durrul Mukhtaar* says: It is strictly prohibited for men to shave their beards.
- Allama Anwar Shah Kashmiri Hanafi says in Faizul Baari (4:380): Shaving the beard to less than a handful is strictly prohibited (haraam) by the consensus of all Imams.
- Imam Azra'ee of the Shafi'ee school of fiqh says: The fact is that shaving the entire beard without any admissible excuse is strictly prohibited (haraam).¹¹
- Shaikh Ahmad Faasi Maliki writes: Shaving of the entire beard and shaving off or picking away white hairs of the beard are prohibited.¹²
- Abun Najjaaf Hanbali writes: Allowing the beard to grow is compulsory and shaving it is prohibited (haraam).¹³

How was the Prophet's beard?

Various hadiths describing the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم beard tell us that his beard was dense and bulky (Muslim)¹⁴. Hazrat Anas reports that when the holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed wudhu, he took water in his hand and tuck in his fingers inside the beard below the lower jaw (Abu Dawood)¹⁵. The holy

¹⁰ Abu Dawood:36

عن رويغ قال: قال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم " يا رويغ لعل الحياة ستطول بك بعدي فأخبر الناس أنه من عقد لحيته أو تقلد وترا أو استنجدى برجيع دابة أو عظم فإن محمدا [صلى الله عليه وسلم] منه بريء "

¹¹ *Tuhfatul Muhtaj* (Fasl Aqqeqa) by Ahmad bin Qasim Abbadi Shafi'ee

¹² Commentary on *Risala Abu Zaid*

¹³ *Al Iqnaa'* by (Fasl fil Imtishaat wal Iddihaan) by Abun Najjaaf Sharafuddin Moosa Hajjavi Maqdisi (d. 968 AH).

¹⁴ Muslim 2344 باب شبيه صلى الله عليه وسلم عن جابر بن سمرة
كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد شمت مقدم رأسه ولحيته وكان إذا ادهن لم يتبين وإذا شعث رأسه تبين وكان كثير شعر اللحية.

¹⁵ Abu Dawood 145 باب تخليل اللحية

Prophet was also in the habit of frequently applying oil to his head and combing his beard (As Shamaailul Muhammadia)¹⁶. Abu Dawood reports that Hazrat Khabbaab bin Al Aratt was asked if the holy Prophet read Quran in Zuhr and Asr (farz salaats). Hz Khabbaab replied in the affirmative. He was again asked how the Sahaaba who were standing behind the holy Prophet could know that. Hazrat Khabbaab replied, "By the movement of the beard"¹⁷. Obviously, a trimmed beard or one that is less than a handful cannot have the attribute described above. Thus the above mentioned hadiths conclusively prove without leaving any shade of doubt that Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم beard was dense and large, a handful or more, for one cannot and need not insert his fingers inside a trimmed beard, nor can one comb them, nor can their movement be seen from behind the person's back.

Therefore, Mufti Saeed Sb Palanpuri (Shaikhul Hadith, Darul Uloom, Deoband) writes that having beard is compulsory, ... and shaving it without an excuse permissible in Islam is haraam, ... and making the beard shorter than a handful is forbidden (makrooh e tahreemi)¹⁸. A person who has trimmed beard is a faasiq (open violator) of Islamic law. So if such a person is the imam of a mosque, it is compulsory for him to do tauba (repentance) and stop trimming beards. However if the imam persists in this sin, he should be removed from his post. Saying salaah behind him will be makrooh (forbidden). Imam Ibn Maaja reports that the Prophet said, "No faajir (open violator of Islamic law) should be the imam of a believer."¹⁹ Imam Baihaqi relates that Hazrat Ibn Umar quotes the holy Prophet as saying, "Make the best among you your imams, for they are the leaders of your delegation to your Lord."²⁰

Thus Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence make it very clear that beards have great importance in Islam. They are not something which can be compromised with as and when the situation so demands. Looking at our past sins, a good Islamic beard can be a source of assurance for us on the Final Day. At least we will be able to say to Allah, the One:

تیرے محبوب کی یا رب شہادت لے کے آیا ہوں حقیقت تو اسے کر دے میں صورت لے کے آیا ہوں

*I am here with similarity in appearance to Your chosen one صلى الله عليه وسلم,
Make this similarity real, as I have come with the appearance of your chosen one.*

عن أنس بن مالك : أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم " كان إذا توضأ أخذ كفا من ماء فأدخله تحت حنكه فخلل به لحيته.

¹⁶ Shamaail 33

عن أنس بن مالك قال قال رسول الله يكثر دهن رأسه وتسريح لحيته.

¹⁷ Abu Dawood 801 باب ما جاء في القراءة في الظهر

عن أبي معمر قال قلنا لخباب: هل كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقرأ في الظهر والعصر؟ قال نعم. قلنا بم كنتم تعرفون ذلك؟ قال باضطراب لحيته.

¹⁸ *Beard and the Practices of the Prophets* p15 (ibn Maaja: 1081).

¹⁹ لا يؤم فاجر مؤمناً. (ابن ماجه)

²⁰ وقد ورد عن ابن عمر مرفوعاً: اجعلوا أئمتكم خياركم، فإنهم وفدكم فيما بينكم وبين ربكم. رواه البيهقي.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا {33:57}

وَالصِّلَنَّهُمْ وَلَا مَنِيَّ لَهُمْ وَلَا مَرَنَّهُمْ فَلْيَبْتَكَنْ أَذَانُ الْأَنْعَامِ وَلَا مَرَنَّهُمْ فَلْيَغَيِّرَنَّ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُبِينًا {4:119}

Fathul Baree v10p350

قوله وكان بن عمر إذا حج أو اعتمر قبض على لحيته فما فضل أخذه هو موصول بالسند المذكور إلى نافع وقد أخرجه مالك في الموطأ عن نافع بلفظ كان بن عمر إذا حلق رأسه في حج أو عمرة أخذ من لحيته وشاربه

قلت الذي يظهر أن بن عمر كان لا يخص هذا التخصيص بالنسك بل كان يحمل الأمر بالاعفاء على غير الحالة التي تنتشوه فيها الصورة بافراط طول شعر اللحية أو عرضه

Umdatul Qari vol22p46

قوله خالفوا المشركين أراد بهم المجوس يدل عليه رواية مسلم خالفوا المجوس لأنهم كانوا يقصرون لحاهم ومنهم من كان يحلقها

Umda vol 22 p47-48

وروي عن عمر رضي الله عنه أنه رأى رجلاً قد ترك لحيته حتى كبرت فأخذ يجذبها ثم قال انتوني بحلمتين ثم أمر رجلاً فجزم ما تحت يده ثم قال إذهب فأصلح شعرك أو أفسده بترك أحكمك نفسه حتى كأنه سبع من السباع وكان أبو هريرة يقبض على لحيته فيأخذ ما فضل وعن ابن عمر مثله

Bukhari:5554 باب تقليم الأظفار

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم (انهكوا الشوارب وأعفوا اللحى)

Bukhari:5553 باب تقليم الأظفار

عن ابن عمر: عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال (خالفوا المشركين وفروا اللحى وأحفوا الشوارب) . وكان ابن عمر إذا حج أو اعتمر قبض على لحيته فما فضل أخذه

Muslim:261 باب خصال الفطرة

عن زكرياء بن أبي زائدة عن مصعب بن شيبه عن طلق بن حبيب عن عبدالله بن الزبير عن عائشة قالت: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

:عشر من الفطرة قص الشارب وإعفاء اللحية والسواك واستنشاق الماء وقص الأظفار وغسل البراجم ونتف الإبط وحلق العانة وانتقاص الماء

قال زكرياء قال مصعب ونسيت العاشرة إلا أن تكون المضمضة

Muslim:260 باب خصال الفطرة

عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم جزوا الشوارب وأرخوا اللحى خالفوا المجوس.

Tirmizi 2762 باب ما جاء في الأخذ من اللحية

عن عمرو بن شعيب عن أبيه عن جده: أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يأخذ من لحيته من عرضها وطولها

قال أبو عيسى هذا حديث غريب

Abu Dawood 145 باب تخليل اللحية

عن أنس بن مالك

:أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم " كان إذا توضأ أخذ كفا من ماء فأدخله تحت حنكه فخلل به لحيته وقال هكذا أمرني ربي عز وجل "

Abu Dawood:36

عن رويغ قال: قال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم " يا رويغ لعل الحياة ستطول بك بعدي فأخبر الناس أنه من عقد لحيته أو تقلد وترا أو استنجدى برجيع دابة أو عظم فإن محمدا [صلى الله عليه وسلم] منه بريء "

Muslim 2344 باب شبيه صلى الله عليه وسلم عن جابر بن سمرة

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد شمت مقدم رأسه ولحيته وكان إذا ادهن لم يتبين وإذا شعث رأسه تبين وكان كثير شعر اللحية

Abu Dawood 801 باب ما جاء في القراءة في الظهر

عن أبي معمر قال قلنا لخباب

:هل كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقرأ في الظهر والعصر ؟ قال نعم قلنا بم كنتم تعرفون ذلك ؟ قال باضطراب لحيته .

Nasai 5232 59 اتخاذ الجمعة

عن البراء قال : كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم رجلا مربوعا عريض ما بين المنكبين كث اللحية تعلوه حمرة جمته إلى شحمتي أذنيه لقد رأيته في حلة حمراء ما رأيته أحسن منه

Musnad Ahmad 684

عن محمد بن علي رضي الله عنه عن أبيه : قال كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ضخم الرأس عظيم العينين هدب الاشفار مشرب العين بحمرة كث اللحية أزهر اللون إذا مشى تكفأ كأنما يمشى في سعد وإذا التفت التفت جميعا شثن الكفين والقدمين

Musnad Ahmad 796

عن محمد بن علي رضي الله عنه عن أبيه : قال كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ضخم الرأس عظيم العينين هدب الاشفار قال حسن الشفار مشرب العينين بحمرة كث اللحية أزهر اللون شثن الكفين والقدمين إذا مشى كأنما يمشى في سعد قال حسن تكفأ وإذا التفت التفت جميعا

Shamail 8

عن هند بن أبي هالة ... قال كان رسول الله...كث اللحية سهل الخدين

Shamail 33

عن انس بن مالك قال كان رسول الله يكثر دهن رأسه وتسريح لحيته ويكثر القناع حتى كأن ثوبه ثوب زيات

Book: Daarhee ki Shara'ee, Falsafi aur Taareekhee Haisiyat

Page: 17 Year: 1990 Muallif: Al Haaj Niyaaz Muhammad Khan Durrani

Publisher: Sardar Muhammad Khan Durrani

Medical Benefits

Moustache

Long moustaches are unhygienic and unhealthy as they come in the way of eating and drinking contaminating the food and the drink. So principles of healthcare demand that they be trimmed short so that they do not overflow the lips.

Harms of Beard-shaving

Trimming the beard needlessly is a waste of precious time while shaving it is harmful for health. When any organ is subjected to constant irritation, the vital force of that organ gets weakened. Therefore, the perpetual irritation to the facial cells during shaving may impair them, consequently darkening them. This unnatural periodic irritation and strain on the cells may turn them into malignant cells eventually resulting in cancer, the disease without an answer. Similarly, the bacteria and aerobic germs may attack the delicate facial tissues producing irritation, soreness, itch and eczema.

Renowned English doctor Gandur writes that beard has immense influence on a person's personality and general behaviour. It normally turns the man into an honourable pious person. (Hamdard Health magazine)

According to another doctor, the eighth progeny of a beard-shaver is highly likely to be a eunuch. (Kitab – Falsafa Qutbi).

The History of Beard-Shaving

Before the invention of razor and scissor

In the past before the invention of scissors and razors, every male face used to be populated with beards. Even after that beard continued to hold an exalted status among the noble men of all ages as it was rightly considered a symbol of masculinity. It was also considered to be a mark of righteousness and truthfulness. All the Greek and Roman philosophers sported beards.

Sicily Barbers begin the practice of beard-shaving

In 300 B.C., with the migration of the barbers of Sicily to Greece and Rome, the practice of beard-shaving started. But it was confined to the uncivilized tribes at that time. Then came Alexander of Macedon (356-323 B.C.). He shaved the beards of all his soldiers fearing that the enemy might overpower them catching the hold of their beards. After Alexander's death, beard regained its position of prominence in Europe and other nations.

Muslim Beard

The beards of Muslims used to be long. They used to oil and comb them. The aged Muslims appeared red because of hair-dyeing. In the Abbasi period, a few Muslims also started to trim beards in imitation of the Persians. The Mughal king Jalaluddin Akbar was influenced by the local Indians in trimming beards. But the Indian Muslims disapproved of Akbar's act. After Akbar, Jahangir followed the footsteps of his dead father in shaving his beards. Every disliked it but none could dare to ask the king why he did this. However, a respected cleric of the court Shaikhul Islam did question him. Jahangir gave a childish reply that I shave my beard so that my minister may not pull me whichever way he likes, taking hold of my beard.

Two-cent Beard Tax

In the 13th century, beards were quite common in England. In the 15th century, the legislators of King Henry VIII made a law forbidding common men from sporting beards. If a commoner anyway wanted to keep his beard, he had to pay a fee of two cent every week as per the law. In spite of this, people continued to love their beards and preferred to pay the foolish tax imposed on them by eccentric legislators every week. In 1555, Queen Mary sent four bearded envoys to the Russian king. The Russian king on seeing the beards broke into a sudden laughter, embarrassing the envoys no end. This incident had a big influence on the English. Then during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the beard-tax was raised to three shillings and four pence which was to be imposed on any person who had not shaved his beard for more than 15 days. Consequently, beards became less and less common. A little later, a similar beard-tax was imposed in Russia. The noble men of Russia used to maintain their beards in spite of the stupid tax.

Philip V orders Beard-shaving in 1700

In 1700, Philip V was made the king. As a manifestation of Allah's power, his body had no hair on it. So he was naturally intolerant towards beards. He ordered all his ministers, bureaucrats and noble men to shave their beards. Thus beard-shaving gained currency in that period.

A blemish below Francis I's cheek made him keep beards

In 1551, when Francis I became the king of France, he had an ugly blemish below his cheek. So he sported beards to hide that ugliness. His courtiers imitated him. The last emperor of France, Napoleon sported a new kind of beard: both the cheeks were shaved and a little beard remained on the chin. This kind of French-cut beard soon gained popularity even outside France.

A new kind of beard in Germany and Austria

In a tit-for tat, the kings of Germany and France sported a beard that was just opposite to the French-cut: hair on both the cheeks and the chin shaved. This sort of beard in particular appealed to the Russian military officers. They not only adopted it but also promoted it. Through them, the fashion came to India and many rajas and maharajas adopted it.

The Longest Beard

A German painter, Chohaan Tayo is reported to have had the longest beard. It is said that his beard was long that it would touch the ground when he stood upright. So sometimes, Chohaan would tie his beard around his waist.